

FORWARD

Every one of us generates waste. With approximately 8.4 million residents living in the most densely populated state in the nation, the environmentally sound management of New Jersey's solid waste is a public policy challenge that is neither static, nor insignificant in scope.

From the disposal capacity crisis of the mid- 1980's, the dissolution of regulatory flow control of the mid-1990's and on to falling recycling rates over the last several years, this issue is marked by the need for ongoing governmental attention. Upward trends in the generation of solid waste over the past several years will lead to the necessity for identification of additional disposal capacity in the not too distant future, which will result in more pressure on the quality of life in many communities of the state, in addition to increased costs for solid waste disposal. If recent generation trends continue, and we do nothing to reduce the waste stream, or increase recycling tonnage, one can predict a waste stream of some 33 million tons by 2015. The present transfer and disposal system in this state is not sufficient to provide for the management of this volume of waste, and it is in this context that the following Statewide Solid waste Management Plan update is presented.

This document is intended to provide the framework and vision necessary for all levels of government in the state to understand the current challenge and fulfill their responsibilities under the Solid Waste Management Act. The State has provided the planning tool (this document) that details the steps necessary to enhance recycling through State, county and local government action, and provides recommendations for legislative initiatives we feel are necessary to assist in this endeavor. When these various strategies are implemented, we believe that the diverse costs associated with solid waste management, from natural resource utilization to air and water pollution and commitment of local tax dollars, will be reduced.

Given this vision, and mindful of the consequences for failing to take action at this time, the state fully anticipates a focused and collaborative effort by all parties to reinvigorate the recycling mandate in New Jersey, and return us to a solid waste management policy that demonstrates true leadership.